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CPAC members oppose inclusion of gay-rights group

Organizers of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) have made a decision that's got Focus on the Family Action and other Christian sponsors livid.

In December, CPAC, an annual rally of Republican leaders and Christian conservatives, accepted GOProud as a co-sponsor of CPAC's February event in Washington, D.C. GOProud supports gay rights and marriage, but still considers itself a conservative Republican group because it is for smaller government, lower taxes and strong national defense, GOProud executive director Jimmy LaSalvia told me.

"It is vitally important that all the members of the conservative party come together and offer solutions to the Democrats' unmitigated growth of government," LaSalvia said of the reason GOProud wanted to be part of CPAC 2010.

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But that's not good enough for some faith-based CPAC sponsors.

"We're fully engaged in making our objection known, both to the CPAC committee and to the parent organization, the American Conservative Union," said Tom Minnery, senior vice president of government and public policy for Focus Action, the political arm of Focus on the Family. Minnery did not say if Focus Action would pull out of CPAC if GOProud remained a co-sponsor.

Gary Glenn, president of the faith-based American Family Association of Michigan, said GOProud's inclusion is a mockery. "It does damage when CPAC gives its seal of approval of a group exploring a hard-left agenda," Glenn said.

Kevin Roberts is executive director of Catholic Families for America, a CPAC co-sponsor. He told me he will make his displeasure known over the inclusion of the gay-rights group during his CPAC speech.

"I will be speaking on traditional values (during my speech)," Roberts said.

CPAC did not return phone calls for an interview.

Formed in April, GOProud has 2,000 members who believe fiscal conservatism can exist alongside gay-rights activism. LaSalvia formed the Washington, D.C.-based group after learning that 1.3 million gays voted for Sen. John McCain in the 2008 presidential election. That made him realize that Republican gay-rights supporters need a voice.

LaSalvia, who is gay, is OK being in a political party that, for the most part, opposes his desire to legally marry a man. "Just because we disagree on a few issues, we still have a lot of views in common," he said.

But it's not all an uphill battle for GOProud. Some CPAC co-sponsors, such as JunkScience.com, welcome the organization.

"If the group is for free enterprise, individual liberty, sound science and limited government, and is against socialism and central government, it's OK with me," JunkScience.com founder Steve Milloy said.

For more interviews with co-sponsors on the CPAC controversy, go to my blog, The Pulpit, at www.thepulpit.freedomblogging.com. Call me at 636-0367.